

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 IO-13 ISO-00 CIAE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-10
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AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEN
AMCONSUL ISTANBUL
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY PARIS
USNMR SHAPE BEL
USCINCEUR VAIHINOEN GER
USDOCOSOUTH NAPLES IT
USMISSION USNATO
USMISSION USUN NEWYORK
DIA WASHDC

C O N F I D E N T I A L NICOSIA 1356

BRUSSELS FOR USEEC USCINCEUR FOR POLAD USDOCOSOUTH FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PGOV, CY
SUBJ: COOPERATING PARTIES SPLIT OVER VILLAGE ELECTIONS ISSUE

1. A SEVERE RIFT HAS DEVELOPED AMONG THE THREE COOPERATING
PARTIES IN HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OVER QUESTION OF WHETHER
VILLAGE ELECTIONS SHOULD BE POSTPONED. THE GOVERNING DEMOCRATIC
PARTY OF PRESIDENT KYPRIOANOU WON THE VOTE TO POSTPONE ELECTIONS,
BUT AT CONSIDERABLE COST TO SPIRIT OF COOPERATION WITH COMMUNIST
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(AKEL) AND SOCIALIST (EDEK) PARTIES WHICH HAS PREVAILED FOR PAST
YEAR AND HALF.

2. NO ELECTIONS FOR VILLAGE HEADMEN (LOCALLY CALLED
MUKHTARS)
HAVE BEEN HELD SINCE 1928, SHORTLY BEFORE BRITISH COLONIAL
GOVERNMENT ABOLISHED ALL LOCAL ELECTIONS IN WAKE OF VIOLENT

NATIONALIST DISTURBANCES. SINCE THAT TIME, POSITION OF MUKHTAR HAS BEEN APPOINTIVE. IN LAST YEAR'S SESSION, HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES PASSED LAW REINSTATING VILLAGE ELECTIONS, AND JUNE 4, 1978 WAS DULY SET AS DATE FOR ELECTIONS TO BE HELD.

3. AS POLLING DAY DREW NEAR, KYPRIANOU GOVERNMENT APPARENTLY HAD SECOND THOUGHTS ABOUT ELECTIONS AND THIS MONTH FORMED COMMITTEE TO STUDY WHETHER ELECTIONS SHOULD BE POSTPONED. COMMITTEE RECOMMENDED THAT HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES POSTPONE ELECTIONS ON GROUNDS THAT THEY WOULD BE DISRUPTIVE OF UNITY AT A CRITICAL TIME. DEMOCRATIC PARTY TABLED BILL IN HOUSE MAY 18 TO POSTPONE ELECTIONS UNTIL SUCH TIME COUNCIL OF MINISTERS COULD CALL THEM AND TO EXTEND TERMS OF OFFICE OF INCUMBENT MUKHTARS UNTIL NEXT DECEMBER.

4. GOVERNMENT'S ACTION PROVOKED IMMEDIATE OUTCRY FROM AKET AND EDEK, WHICH ACCUSED GOVERNMENT OF BEING UNDEMOCRATIC, ARGUED THAT HOLDING OF ELECTIONS WOULD PROMOTE UNITY RATHER THAN THE CONTRARY, AND ACCUSED GOVERNMENT OF RENEGING ON COMMITMENT TO PEOPLE OF CYPRUS. LEFTIST PRESS FULMINATED AGAINST POSTPONEMENT PROPOSAL FOR SEVERAL DAYS, WITH COMMUNIST HARAVGHI SAYING THAT -UNITY OF PATRIOTIC FORCES," ITS PHRASE FOR COOPERATION BETWEEN THREE PARTIES, WAS BEING UNDERMINED. RIGHTIST PRESS ALSO OPPOSED GOVERNMENT PROPOSAL, BUT IN Milder TERMS. PRINCIPAL OPPOSITION PAPER SIMERINI, WHICH GENERALLY REFLECTS THINKING OF GLAFCOS CLERIDES' DEMOCRATIC RALLY, DELIGHTED IN IRONY OF SITUATION, CONFIDENTIAL

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SEIZED UPON ISSUE TO RIDICULE GOVERNMENT, AND CALLED FOR DISSOLUTION OF HOUSE AND NEW PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS BASED ON PROPORTIONAL REPRESENTATION. ONLY DEMOCRATIC PARTY MOUTHPIECE ELEFTHERI KYPROS SUPPORTED GOVERNMENT POSITION.

5. FUROR REACHED CLIMAX MAY 23 IN VITRIOLIC FLOOR DEBATE OVER POSTPONEMENT BILL IN HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES. AKEL SECRETARY GENERAL PAPAIOANNOU ANGRILY CHARGED THAT DEMOCRATIC PARTY MIGHT HAVE AN ARTIFICIAL MAJORITY IN THE HOUSE BUT DID NOT HAVE A MAJORITY AMONG THE PEOPLE; EVIDENTLY, HE SAID, DEMOCRATIC PARTY'S CONCEPT OF COOPERATION MEANT SUBSERVIENCE ON PART OF EDEK AND AKEL. EDEK PRESIDENT LYSSARIDES SAID DEMOCRATIC PARTY WAS IMPOSING "INDIRECT DICTATORSHIP". FINAL VOTE ON BILL WAS 18 FOR (ALL DEMOCRATIC PARTY), AND 14 AGAINST (8 AKEL, 4 EDEK, 2 INDEPENDENTS), AND ONE ABSTENTION (INDEPENDENT TASSOS PAPADOPOULOS).

6. COMMENT. ELECTION CONTROVERSY IS SIGNIFICANT PRIMARILY BECAUSE IT PROVOKED MOST SERIOUS SPLIT BETWEEN THREE COOPERATING PARTIES SINCE MAKARIOS SET UP THE SYSTEM IN 1976. PARTIES HAVE DISAGREED ON A FEW ISSUES IN PAST BUT NEVER IN SUCH HEATED, DIVISIVE TERMS. INCIDENT WAS ALSO IMPORTANT AS ILLUSTRATION OF DEMOCRATIC PARTY'S ABILITY TO USE ITS ABSOLUTE MAJORITY IN HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

(19 OUT OF 35 SEATS) TO PUSH THROUGH WHAT IT CONSIDERS IMPORTANT
MEASURES EVEN IN FACE OF FIERCE
LEFTIST OPPOSITION. HOWEVER,
PRESIDENT KYPRIANOU MAY HAVE BEEN SENSITIZED TO ANY FURTHER
DIRECT CONFRONTATION WITH LEFTIST PARTIES. AFTER
VOTE, HE
ISSUED STATEMENT FROM NEW YORK IN WHICH, WHILE DEFENDING
GOVERNMENT'S POSITION, HE PROMISED TO CONSULT ALL PARTIES ON HIS
RETURN TO CYPRUS TO FIND A SATISFACTORY SOLUTION TO THE PROBLEM
CREATED BY POSTPONEMENT OF ELECTIONS. WE WOULD EXPECT HIM TO
SEEK TO COOL THE ISSUE AND TO AVOID SUCH SHARP CONFRONTATIONS
IN FUTURE. END COMMENT.
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